



# San Diego Chapter 1 Member Biography

## Rip Reopelle

**R**ip was born and raised in Minneapolis. During the last year of high school he became interested in learning how to fly an airplane. After graduating in 1942, he joined the Army Air Corps Pilot Training Program and was sent to Jefferson Barracks, Missouri. The next 18 months he experienced excellent training at various Army Air Corps bases primarily in the southwestern part of the country until graduation in June 1944.

The rest of his training program was spent learning how to fly a B-17 at Yuma, Az. with another outstanding instructor. In the fall of 1944, his crew went to England on the Queen Elizabeth II to join the 8th Air Force 379th. Bomb Group in Kimbolton, England.

On his 11th. mission with another crew, his plane crashed on take off and he spent 2 weeks in the hospital and then returned to his regular crew. Only 4 survived that crash. On the 13th.



mission as co-pilot, his plane was shot down and he and his engineer were taken prisoners together and the others who survived were taken in other areas. Two of the crew were killed.

He was liberated on April 29, 1945 by Gen. George Patton at Moosburg, Germany, from Stalag VII-A. He returned by way of Camp Lucky Strike and then to New York Harbor on a former German ship.

After returning home, he and his wife decided he should take advantage of the GI Bill, so he went to the University of Minnesota for 2 years and transferred to Arizona State to complete his Bachelor's and Master's in Education. They

moved to National City in 1950 where he took a six grade teaching job. He later became principal, and then after receiving his PhD, became superintendent of the National School District.

After his retirement from the school district he was appointed as a Port Commissioner to the San Diego Port District for 8 years. During that time he and his wife traveled extensively until her death after 46 memorable years. Their 3 sons live in Southern California. He and his present wife have been married since 1999.

He retired from the Air Force Reserve with a rank as Major.

He feels he has had a very fortunate life, and thanks the man upstairs for taking such good care of him.